



Alfalfa plant, showing large tap root, feeding roots, and numerous tubercles. Also sprig, showing blossom and seed pod

# ALFALFA

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## ALFALFA

**Alfalfa Gaining Favor.**—Alfalfa has many more friends in Ohio today than it had five years ago, and the acreage will likely increase quite rapidly in the next few years, due to the scarcity and extremely high price of red clover seed and a better understanding of how to secure a stand of alfalfa without extra labor.

**Alfalfa May be Grown in All Parts of Ohio.**—Alfalfa need not be confined to any one section of Ohio, altho it is a good deal easier to grow it successfully in the west central part of the state than in some other parts. There is hardly a county in the state, however, but what has some acreage of alfalfa. If good drainage is provided, plenty of limestone furnished, and soil is in a fair state of fertility, alfalfa should do well.

**Alfalfa a Long Lived Crop.**—There are some decided advantages in growing alfalfa as a hay crop or for pasture. One of the chief advantages is the fact that alfalfa is a perennial crop, and hence one seeding of the crop under favorable conditions will remain on the land and produce profitable yields of hay or forage for several years. In Ohio the usual length of time it is found profitable to allow it to remain without reseeding is 4 or 5 years.

**Alfalfa Fits Into Rotations.**—It is a mistake to believe that alfalfa will not fit into a rotation of crops. Some of our most successful farmers are using alfalfa in the rotation in the same manner that most men use red clover, that is, they sow the seed in spring with oats or on wheat, harvest the hay crop the following season and then turn down the alfalfa sod for corn the following spring.

Ordinarily alfalfa should not be clipped the same season it is sown, but it sometimes happens that there is such a large growth comes on after the wheat or oats is removed that clipping may be desirable. If the young crop is clipped the first year it should not be done late in the season as it is important that there should be a good growth to go into cold weather.

**Alfalfa Makes Large Yields.**—A great advantage that alfalfa has over other hay crops is the fact that much larger yields of hay can be secured than from any other hay crop. Usually three cuttings are secured during the season, and often 4 or 5 tons of excellent hay are made per acre per year.

**Deep Roots Improve Soil.**—Because alfalfa has a very deep root system, it withstands dry weather much better than red clover or other pasture and hay crops, and hence in dry seasons it furnishes splendid pasture or produces good hay when other crops are a complete failure. Then, too, the advantage of the deep root system comes in in the improvement of the drainage conditions of the soil and in adding organic matter to the deeper layers of the soil.

**Soil Requirements.**—Alfalfa is perhaps more exacting in its soil requirements than most other crops. The soil must be well drained, fairly fertile, well limed, and inoculated with the proper organisms. Land should not be foul with weeds for successful growing of alfalfa. Land that will ordinarily produce 35 or 40 bushels of corn per acre should grow alfalfa fairly well.

**Kind of Seed to Sow.**—Perhaps the best kind of alfalfa seed for Ohio conditions is good, clean, American-grown seed. We have heard a great deal about the superior qualities of Grimm alfalfa seed, but it is very doubtful whether Grimm alfalfa seed is superior to the common alfalfa in this state. Various tests of the different kinds of seed have been made on the County Experiment Farms thruout Ohio, and up to date the common alfalfa seed seems to be doing as well as the Grimm seed.

**Where and How to Sow Alfalfa.**—The mistake has often been made of spending too much time and labor in preparing the seedbed for alfalfa. If alfalfa is ever to assume very much importance in Ohio, we must learn that it can be sown in the same manner that red clover is most commonly sown, that is, on wheat in spring, or with oats as a nurse crop. Many farmers are now sowing alfalfa with the disk drill on their wheat in spring, and are getting good results.

**Where and How to Sow Alfalfa.**—Barley is a quite satisfactory crop with which to seed alfalfa, since it does not make such a rank growth as either wheat or oats, and thus makes conditions more favorable for the young alfalfa plants.

Oftentimes oats and Canada field peas are sown in spring for hay crop. If land is plowed soon after removing this hay crop and a solid seed bed prepared, a very good opportunity is thus afforded to sow alfalfa. In this case it is probably best to sow alfalfa alone about the last of July or first part of August.

In any case it hardly seems a wise practice to plow land in spring and allow it to lie idle all summer just for sake of seeding alfalfa early in the fall.

**Amount of Seed to Sow Per Acre.**—If alfalfa is sown with disk grain drill or with the regular disk alfalfa seeders, 10 pounds per acre is an ample amount of seed to use. It is sometimes recommended that 20 to 30 pounds of seed be sown. Such practice seems like a waste of good seed. Experimental work at Wooster shows that 10 pounds per acre gave better results than seed sown at a heavier rate.

**Alfalfa Seed Should be Inoculated.**—To insure best results with alfalfa it is always wise to sow inoculated seed. There are good, reliable, commercial cultures on the market with which to inoculate the seed that are advertised in the farm papers, or good inoculation may be secured by taking soil from a field that has grown alfalfa or sweet-clover successfully.

**How to Treat Alfalfa When it Turns Yellow.**—A very common sight in alfalfa fields in Ohio is the peculiar yellow color that occurs after the first cutting is made. Should the weather be quite dry and particularly if the stand is quite young, the second crop grows only a few inches high and turns yellow, and apparently stops growing. The best thing to do is to cut it at once even tho it is not big enough to rake up for hay. It often happens that the next crop will come on with a healthy green color.

**Alfalfa Should Become an Important Crop in Ohio.**—It seems that for good and sufficient reasons alfalfa should occupy a very important place in Ohio. It is a legume, having a splendid deep-root system, that enables it to improve the physical condition as well as adding to the supply of nitrogen in the soil. The alfalfa crop furnishes the maximum amount of hay of high feeding value per acre. It is drouth resistant, furnishing splendid forage when other crops are brown and seer.

It can be adapted to almost any rotation if the soil is put into condition to grow the crop. If it is desired, alfalfa will remain on a soil without reseeding for several years.

Because of these and other reasons alfalfa should eventually assume a very important place in Ohio agriculture.